

Wakamiya Shrine

The Wakamiya Shrine is the second most important shrine at the Tsurugaoka Hachimangu, after the Main Shrine. The term *wakamiya* is used for a sub-shrine which enshrines a child of the central deity of the main shrine or has a special relationship to that deity, and the four deities enshrined here are all related to Emperor Ojin, or Hachiman, the guardian deity of the warrior class and of the nation of Japan, who is enshrined in the main shrine. The four deities are Ojin's wife Empress Nakatsu, his son Emperor Nintoku, Nintoku's wife Empress Iwano, and their son Emperor Richu, all semi-mythical figures.

This hierarchical arrangement of an upper and lower shrine dates to 1191, when Tsurugaoka Hachimangu was rebuilt after a fire devastated the grounds. Before that, there was one main shrine, which stood close to where Wakamiya is today, at the foot of the stone staircase that leads to the current Main Shrine.

Guarding against fire was a factor in deciding to establish a new main sanctuary on the mountainside, as the location would offer protection against flames spreading from a fire in the town below. The stone staircase that connects the Main Shrine and Wakamiya was built at that time.

The current Wakamiya shrine building, designated an Important Cultural Property, was completed in 1624. It is in the same *gongen-zukuri* style as the Main Shrine, with the worship hall (*haiden*), offering hall (*heiden*), and main shrine (*honden*) all under one roof.